

STAFF REPORT

TO: Mayor and Council Members

DATE: March 22, 2016

VIA: Gary Jackson, City Manager

FROM: Scott Burnette, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: FY 15 SAFER Grant

Summary Statement: The consideration of a resolution authorizing the City of Asheville Fire Department (Fire Department) to apply for a grant in the amount of \$868,032 from the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security to obtain funding for nine additional firefighter positions.

Review: Recently, the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security solicited submissions for the FY 2015 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program which is a two year grant opportunity for fire departments to increase or maintain the number of trained, 'front line' firefighters within communities. The grant, which provides 100% funding for the additional firefighter's salaries and benefits over two years, requested the submission of applications by March 25, 2016 with grant awards being made between June 1 – September 30. Recipients awarded under the grant program have no obligation to retain the SAFER funded positions after the conclusion of the grant funded period.

The SAFER grant opportunity could enable the Fire Department to utilize funding that supports the maintenance of trained, front line firefighters within the community.

This action aligns with the Council's 2036 Vision statement in that it supports the concepts of 'A Smart City' by controlling costs while providing the highest level of service and diversification of revenue sources.

Pros:

- Hiring nine new firefighters will help reduce overtime.
- The grant covers 100% of the cost for these firefighters for two years.

Cons:

- In year three (FY 2019), the City would be responsible for assuming the full cost of firefighters added by the grant. However, since the grant is non-matching the City would not have to absorb the costs if it chose not to. The firefighters would be absorbed into the Fire Department's current full time equivalent (FTE) count.

Fiscal Impact: If awarded, the grant would provide the City with \$434,016 each year for two years. In year three, the City could chose to absorb the \$434,016 annually. The additional positions will also assist to offset annual overtime expenses due to increased staffing per shift would increase the number of personnel available to meet current minimum staffing requirements.

Recommendation: City staff recommends that City Council authorize a SAFER grant application in the amount of \$868,032 from the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security to obtain funding for 9 additional firefighter positions.

Attachment

(1) Resolution

RESOLUTION NO.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE FIRE DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR A GRANT FROM THE U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY TO OBTAIN FUNDING FOR NINE ADDITIONAL FIREFIGHTER POSITIONS

WHEREAS, the City has authority pursuant to N.C.G.S. §160A-17.1 to apply for and receive grants from the State and Federal government; and

WHEREAS, the US Department of Homeland Security is taking applications for the Fiscal Year 2015 SAFER grant program for the purpose of hiring additional firefighters; and

WHEREAS, the Asheville Fire Department wishes to apply for a grant in the amount of \$868,032 to obtain funding for nine additional firefighter positions;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The fire department is hereby authorized to apply for the Fiscal Year 2014 SAFER grant with the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, for a grant in the amount of \$868,032 to obtain funding for nine additional firefighter positions.

Read, approved and adopted this 22nd day of March, 2016.

City Clerk

Mayor

Approved as to form:

City Attorney